

354 COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S  
HISTORY

fore he was made Commissioner of the  
Treasury (March 18,  
1690). Burnet too seems to place it about  
the end of 1689  
or the beginning of 1690.

In itself the story is improbable. William  
was not the  
man to abandon a task he had undertaken,  
because he met  
with more difficulties than he expected. Still  
less was he  
the man to shift to weaker shoulders a  
responsibility which  
he found too heavy. Least of all was he likely  
to forget  
that his abdication would mean the  
detachment of England  
from the European league against Louis XIV.  
Abdication  
was not in keeping with William's character or  
possible in  
William's position.

But though the story may be absurd, the  
question how it  
came to be invented and circulated and  
credited is worthy  
of examination. Was there anything in  
William's words or  
actions which could be so misconstrued that it  
might give  
rise to the story? Certainly there was. William  
came to  
England for two objects: to restore the  
religious and civil  
liberties of England, and to utilise England for  
the defence  
of the liberties of Europe. His English  
ministers hardly  
realised the place which the second object filled  
in his mind.  
The discovery that he was thinking as much of  
Europe as  
of England, or perhaps more of Europe than of  
England,  
came as a shock to them. This can be traced  
in Halifax's

conversations. He found the King eager for war with France, ' a good while before the warre was declared,' and observes that ' his eagernessee that way never ceased ; it may bee a question, whether that thought was not the great-est inducement to his undertaking.' Another day the King said ' hee had thought as much as hee could think and that there must bee a warre with France'. The war was de-clared against France on May 4-14, 1689, and in the same month William spoke to Halifax about a landing in France.